

*I'm reading
I wonder if
you've seen this.*

Let's Take the Offensive

ANTHONY R. DOLAN

WHILE THE White House has been working to undermine the Moscow Olympics and U.S. senators have proposed everything from trade embargos to military action in response to the Soviet adventure in Afghanistan, the least risky, most effective means of retaliation—one that has in the past made the Soviets apoplectic and yet curiously diffident—is not discussed.

History notes occasional moments of such Soviet outrage and paralysis. In his recent political memoir, Richard Nixon recounts that shortly before his departure for Moscow and the kitchen debates with Khrushchev in 1959, he visited a dying Secretary of State at Walter Reed Hospital. Dulles warned him to expect a chilly reception in Moscow—because, the previous week, Congress had passed a resolution on the Captive Nations.

Khrushchev's Rage

Dulles's deathbed warning was not overstated: Nixon's reception at the Moscow airport was frigid, and Khrushchev's rage transformed a diplomatic conference between the chairman of the Politburo and the Vice President of the United States into a debate over the comparative stench of pig and horse excrement. Khrushchev finally cooled, but promised Nixon that he would hear more about the captive nations during his stay: one occasion, Nixon says, when the Soviet leader kept his word. And yet the bluster, the former President suggests, hid a wariness about American resolve. On the few subsequent occasions when Western diplomats or even publications have called into question the presence of a Soviet occupation army in Eastern Europe, the Kremlin's reaction has been equally loud, equally pained.

There is no surprise in this—totalitarians can be counted upon to know their own vulnerabilities. A few years

ago, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Daniel Patrick Moynihan, after listening to a particularly offensive lecture on American imperialism from the Yugoslavian representative, mentioned quietly the Croatian separatist movement. His sally provoked expressions of horror, then hurried calls between Belgrade and Washington. But the upshot of the diplomatic incident was a break from the anti-American stemwinders and a more subdued Yugoslavian delegation in the General Assembly.

Lawlessness breeds a curious psychology, and it is hardly necessary to look to international events for vivid examples. Students of the phenomenon of entrenched corruption in municipalities and government agencies have long remarked on the astonishing arrogance of mob figures and corrupt officials who—though aware they are under intense scrutiny—continue business as usual. It is only with the indictments and the glare of publicity that this coolness is replaced by hurt, hostile words to reporters, wild swings at photographers. At this point the self-insulation breaks apart and the outlaw sees, almost as if for the first time, himself.

The Kremlin's leaders—aged, comfortable, vastly powerful, surrounded by sycophants—can also not be expected to understand the world as it is, unless they are reminded, stinging, of their own soft underbelly: the hostility of those they have conquered and the injustice of that domination.

Herewith, then, some foreign-policy initiatives designed to exploit Soviet weakness:

► The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations should place on the agenda of the General Assembly a demand for the removal of the Soviet occupation army in Eastern Europe as well as in Afghanistan. The ambassador should follow with a lengthy historical account of Soviet subversion and aggression in Eastern Europe, carefully reconstructing—

the destruction of the national integrity of the Captive Nations, the draining of their natural resources, the deportation of dissidents, the crushed revolts, the assassinations, the massacres.

► The White House should follow with an announcement of a new form of "linkage"—henceforth diplomatic discussions of not only the Afghanistan situation but the range of diplomatic matters from fishing rights to arms reduction will include, at the very least, a ritualistic mention of the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe and demands for a troop-withdrawal timetable.

► With each well-anticipated outburst of invective and hysteria on the part of TASS or *Pravda*, American demands should escalate. The Soviet Union must remove its troops and permit free elections to be held not only in the countries of Central Europe but also in the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and, should the rantings continue, the inner republics of the Ukraine, Georgia, and the Moslem areas, which so deeply resent domination by Moscow.

On the Defensive

Such a strategy would be provocative, but, for the Soviets, disarmingly, debilitatingly so. It is calculated to cause not more aggression but rather second thoughts and retrenchment. Not only will it force the Kremlin into a defensive psychology, it will put the geopolitical frame of reference back on center and focus UN debates not on absurd discussions of colonialism in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico but on the critical issue of the latter half of the twentieth century: Soviet imperial ambitions.

Most important, such a strategy will improve the morale and stability of the West. After the self-deception that led to the spirits of Geneva, Camp David, and Glassboro, to detente and SALT II, to presidential speeches about our "inordinate fear of Communism," we will for a change be telling the truth about the world, about its awful danger, about our resolve to change it. □

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